

**DENTAL HYGIENE TUTORIAL TOY****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 60/718,554, filed Sep. 19, 2005, and incorporated herein by reference.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT**

[0002] Not Applicable

**THE NAMES OF THE PARTIES TO A JOINT RESEARCH AGREEMENT**

[0003] Not Applicable

**INCORPORATION-BY-REFERENCE OF MATERIAL SUBMITTED ON A COMPACT DISC**

[0004] Not Applicable

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0005] 1. Field of the Invention

[0006] The present invention relates to a method and device for instructing and encouraging young children to properly brush their teeth by providing a dental hygiene tutorial toy configured to look like a child's toy, and which provides an audible message regarding proper dental hygiene.

[0007] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0008] As any parent or guardian knows, getting small children to properly brush their teeth can be a chore. For any number of reasons, children do not like to brush their teeth, and it is often time consuming and frustrating for the adult to try to cajole the child to brush, and even when they do brush it is often difficult to get them to brush properly and for a sufficient length of time.

[0009] There are many different methods that have been tried in the past to encourage young children to brush properly. There are many decorative toothbrushes that are configured to look like dolls or have famous cartoon characters on them. These increase the likelihood that a child will pick up a toothbrush, and therefore increase the potential that they will put it in their mouths and brush their teeth. There are also child friendly flavored toothpastes, in such flavors as grape, cherry, and bubble gum, to name a few. This undoubtedly increase the likelihood that children will put toothpaste on a brush and put it into their mouths, which is certainly an important first step, but it does not ensure that the child will brush properly. Both the child friendly toothbrush and toothpaste increase the likelihood that a child will brush, but do nothing to ensure that they brush properly, or engage in other important dental hygiene practices, such as flossing. There is a need, therefore, for a child friendly device that will instruct and encourage children to learn about and hopefully engage in proper dental hygiene.

[0010] Talking and interactive dolls are well known in the art. They come in a variety of shapes and configurations, provide a variety of different messages, and are for a variety of different purposes. Some are purely for entertainment,

such as U.S. Pat. No. 4,802,879, to Rissman et al, which provides an action figure with a visual display that represents a beating heart with flowing blood, and also includes a sound generator that provides a variety of unspecified sounds associated with action figure. As can be appreciated, the '879 patent is designed purely for entertainment purposes.

[0011] There are also a number of instructional talking and interactive dolls. One example is U.S. Pat. No. 5,607,336 to Lebensfeld et al, which discloses a doll with a number of changeable message producing microchips and corresponding outfits. The user of the doll inserts a micro-chip and dresses the doll in a corresponding outfit, and the microchip produces words and phrases relating to the outfit that the doll is wearing. Examples provided in the patent disclosure include an evening gown and swimwear, but the disclosure also mentions that a child could select any number of related micro-chips and outfits for a variety of sports and leisure activities, or for a variety of professions, such as doctors and lawyers. The words produced by the micro-chip appear to be the type of words uttered by a person wearing the corresponding outfit, and do not appear to be instructional, for example regarding the associated profession.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 5,820,440 to Truchsess, discloses a talking doll with a specialized activation device. The activation device is located in the dolls rump area, and is designed to encourage children to handle the doll properly in an attempt to encourage children to play properly with living children. The audible sounds that the doll produces includes laughs, songs, or nursery rhymes, and only play when the doll is bounced on the child's knee. U.S. Pat. No. 6,882,824 to Wood, discloses a doll with a key pad on the chest area. The child user can press various keys on the chest and the doll will respond. For example, in once configuration the key pad consists of the letters of the alphabet, and the doll will say the letter when the corresponding key is pressed. Finally, U.S. Pat. No. 6,106,358 discloses a doll that recites a randomly selected biblical passage when activated.

[0013] Each of these prior art interactive talking dolls serves a particular purpose, but none discloses a talking doll or figurine that provides age appropriate dental hygiene instruction or encouragement.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0014] The invention relates to a toy figure with an internal sound generator that dispenses dental hygiene information. Instructing children in proper dental hygiene and ensuring that they brush properly and for a sufficient length of time has always been a problem for parents and guardians. It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to address that problem by providing a dental hygiene tutorial toy that is configured in a child friendly and child appealing way. Specifically, the dental hygiene tutorial toy is configured to appear like a typical child's toy. In various configurations the invention can resemble a variety of toys, such as stuffed bears or other animals, Barbie® like female figures, or baby-doll toys. Some configurations will appeal to younger children, while others will appeal to slightly older children. In other configurations, therefore, the invention can be configured to resemble a variety of cartoon or comic book characters, television or movie characters, both real and animated, or a variety of super-hero type characters such as Superman®, Batman®, or Spiderman®, to name just a few.